REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner stated that U.S. Patent Nos. 5,051,736; 5,477,012; 5,652,412; 5,661,506; and 5,852,434 are cited in the information disclosure statement on file but that no copies of these patents are included. The applicant is providing copies of these documents with the confirmation copy of the present response.

Specification

The Examiner objected to the abstract of the disclosure as being too long. The applicant has amended the abstract as required by the Examiner.

Claims

The Examiner rejected claims 1-46. By this amendment, claims 1, 4, 18-19, 27, 29, 30, and 41-42 have been amended and new claims 47-52 have been added. Therefore claims 1-52 are pending in the application.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC §103

Claims 1-11, 15-20, 22-24, 26-36, 38-43, and 46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,330,976, which is attributed to Dymetman et al. (and hereafter referred to as "Dymetman"), and also over U.S. Patent No. 5,486,686, which is attributed to Zdybel, Jr. et al. (and hereafter referred to as "Zdybel"). The rejection is respectfully traversed in light of the present amendments to independent claims 1, 4, 27, and 30 that add limitations concerning the "tree of versions" features of the present invention.

The Examiner stated that the applicant's previous argument concerning the above claims was moot in view of the new grounds of rejection that include reference to Zdybel. Zdybel discloses at col. 9, lines 6-8, the concept of "machine detectable materials [or coded data] that may be incorporated into the same printing process that is employed for printing [a] human readable rendering...." However, the coded data of Zdybel is designed to only store "all or part of the structure and content of electronic documents and for transferring that data from the printer of one electronic document processing system to the input scanner of ... another document processing system." (See col. 4, lines 23-27.) Zdybel is not related to a method and system for enabling remote conferencing. Thus, Zdybel clearly does not disclose or suggest using electronic documents to create a "tree of versions" of conference forms as now defined in the amended independent claims.

Independent claims 1, 4, 27, and 30 have been amended to include a "tree of versions" of conference forms where a plurality of conference participants create different versions of a conference form by modifying prior versions of a conference form, which prior versions may have been modified by various conference participants. Further, new claims 49 and 50 were added that define specific information that is recorded with each version of a conference form. Support for these amendments is found in the specification at page 74, lines 4-15:

"Associated with a conference session is a conference whiteboard made up of whiteboard pages 503, each of which may have a number of versions 504 associated with it. A version 504 is uniquely identified by a version number 508. Each version has a line style 506.

Before a session begins the whiteboard is empty. As the session progresses participants create new whiteboard pages, or make markups to existing whiteboard pages. Each time a markup is made and submitted by a participant, a new version of that whiteboard page is created. Each version records the date and time the version was created, the user who made the markups, and the markup content. In addition, each page version is also linked to the version of the page that was marked up to create this version. In this way a "tree" of versions is created for each whiteboard page, recording all the markups made during the session."

New claims 47 and 48 have also been added that define how the "tree" of versions "branches" when a first version of a conferencing form is modifed after a second version of the conferencing form is created. Support for these claims is found in FIG. 48 and in the specification at page 74, lines 16-23:

"The first whiteboard page version is version 0 515. If this version is modified, version 1 516 is created. If version 1 is modified, version 2 is created, and so on. This is called the 'main branch' of the tree. If, however, at some stage during the session a user modifies an older version of the page, then the version numbering system branches. If a user later modifies version 1 then the tree branches and a new version 1.1 517 is created. An example of this version numbering system is shown in Figure 48. In this way, the evolution of each page (and thereby the information exchange process of the conference) can by clearly reviewed at any stage of the session."

Further, new claims 51 and 52 have been added that include printing the tree of versions on a conferencing form using thumbnail images. Support for these claims is found in the specification at page 77, line 30, to page 78, line 4:

"The tree view of page versions is printed on the back of each whiteboard page. If the entire tree does not fit on one page then as much as possible of the current branch is shown. Each version is shown as a thumbnail image, and beside the image is the version number and the update user name. The user can then print a full size copy of the page version by clicking on it."

The present amendments thus further illustrate the novel and non-obvious features between the present invention and the prior art cited by the Examiner. The prior art does not disclose or suggest using frequently updated versions of paper documents to facilitate remote conferencing, such as is enabled by the present disclosure and defined by the present claims.

The Examiner rejected claims 12-14 and 37 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Dymetman and Zdybel also in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,859,967, which is attributed to Kaufeld et al. (and hereinafter referred to as Kaufeld). Kaufeld presents a method and system for sending an email message to a recipient, whereby the recipient receives the email message via fax machine. However Kaufeld does not concern remote conferencing and thus does not disclose or suggest the remote conferencing "tree of versions" defined in the amended claims. The applicant thus submits that the rejection in view of Kaufeld is now moot in light of the present amendments to the independent claims and the arguments presented above.

Claims 21 and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Dymetman and Zdybel also in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,330,589, which is attributed to Kennedy. Kennedy concerns using a client database to manage conversation threads generated from email or news messages. However Kennedy does not disclose or suggest the remote conferencing "tree of versions" defined in the amended claims. The applicant thus submits that the rejection in view of Kennedy is now moot in light of the present amendments to the independent claims and the arguments presented above.

Finally, claims 25 and 45 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Dymetman and Zdybel also in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,592,280, which is attributed to Ishizuka et al. (and hereafter referred to as Ishizuka). Ishizuka discloses a sheet binding apparatus. However Ishizuka does not disclose or suggest the remote conferencing "tree of versions" defined in the amended claims. The applicant thus submits that the rejection in view of Ishizuka is now moot in light of the present amendments to the independent claims and the arguments presented above.

Conclusion

The applicant has corrected deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner concerning the information disclosure statement on file and concerning the specification. Further, all of the independent claims have been amended to incorporate limitations concerning a "tree of versions" used to support remote conferencing, which limitations are neither disclosed nor suggested in the prior art cited by the Examiner. Accordingly, it is submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the application is courteously solicited.

Very respectfully,

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